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E-Mail: sen.moore@legis.state.wi.us

Member: Joint Finance Committee

Board Member: Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority

April 28, 1999

State Senator Gary George State Capitol, Rm. 118-S P.O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator George,

I write to ask for your support of Senate Bill 43, which has been referred to the Committee on Judiciary and Consumer Affairs. This bill would make a slight change to the current drug abatement law. Under current law only city, town or village law enforcement officials are able to enforce the statute. My revision would expand the definition of law enforcement officials to include any law enforcement agency of the state or of a political subdivision of the state. The bill would close a loophole in the original law, which I also authored, whereby Sheriff's and state drug enforcement agents are unable to enforce this provision of the statutes.

The problem addressed is that there are some areas of the state, especially rural areas, that are not protected a city, town or village law enforcement agency. In situations like this, a property owner is unable to use this law to have the tenant evicted for drug or gang activity because the statute limits enforcement to city, town or village law enforcement officials. SB-43 will not apply to Milwaukee County, since the entire county is already covered by one of the above mentioned law enforcement organizations.

The Wisconsin Apartment Association, the Wisconsin Sheriff's and Deputy Sheriff's Association, the Dane County Drug and Narcotics Task Force as well as Milwaukee County Sheriff Lev Baldwin support the modification I have proposed. I hope you will schedule a hearing on this bill as soon as possible so all state law enforcement officials will be able to make use of this law to combat drug and gang activity.

Sincerely,

Senator Gwendolynne S. Moore

4th District



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Member: Joint Finance Committee

Board Member: Wisconsin Housing and
Economic Development Authority

TO: Senate Judiciary and Consumer Affairs Committee

Senators George—Chair, Risser, Clausing, Huelsman, and Darling

FROM: Senator Gwendolynne S. Moore

DATE: May 25, 1999

SUBJECT: Testimony Regarding Senate Bill 43: Strengthening Drug Abatement Law

Due to an unavoidable scheduling conflict, I must apologize for not being able to attend today's committee hearing on Senate Bill 43--the legislation I authored which would strengthen the current drug abatement law. In lieu of testifying before the committee, I submit this written testimony regarding my position.

Under current law—which I originally authored, only city, town or village law enforcement officers can issue letters to property owners stating their rental unit is being used for drug and gang activity. Upon receipt of such a drug abatement letter, property owners are able to require a tenant to vacate the rental unit within five days. Current law grants immunity from liability to agencies as long as officers have acted in good faith in their investigation. This mechanism has proved successful in the fight against havens for drugs and gangs.

However, it has come to my attention that a loophole exists in the case of rental properties that are located outside of a city, town or village. In this event, county sheriff's offices have jurisdiction, yet the current statute does not extend the abatement provision to sheriffs and their deputies. Because of the loophole, efforts to fight drug and gang problems in some areas of the state, especially in rural areas, are stunted.

To put it simply, all law enforcement officers should have the power to initiate the process of evicting persons involved with drug and gang activity. This legislation accomplishes that goal by rewording the state statue to expand the drug and gang abatement provision to all Wisconsin law enforcement officers.

One exception I have included in the proposed legislation is Milwaukee County. As far I have been able to ascertain, Milwaukee County is the only county in the state where all properties are covered by a local law enforcement agency. Therefore, the need does not exist in Milwaukee to enable county officers to intervene.

To conclude, I would like to inform the committee that this bill has received the support of the Wisconsin Apartment Association, the Dance County Narcotics & Gang Task Force, and the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office. This proposal will further strengthen Wisconsin's drug abatement law by covering all jurisdictions, and I urge the committee to take executive action on this bill today. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

State Representative Robert Turner
Testimony on Senate Bill 43
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Consumer Affairs
May 25, 1999

Good morning, Chairman George and Members of the Judiciary and Consumer Affairs Committee. I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the Committee today concerning Senate Bill 43, which would revise and strengthen the current law relating to the eviction of tenants using rental property for drug and gang related activity.

Under current law, if a property owner receives notice from a law enforcement agency of a city, town or village that a rental unit is a nuisance because the unit is being used to facilitate the delivery, distribution or manufacture of a controlled substance or is being used to facilitate the activities of a criminal gang, the property owner may terminate the tenancy by giving the tenant written notice requiring the tenant to vacate on or before a date at least five days after the giving of the notice.

Under current law, the city, town or village, and officers and employes of those municipalities who act in good faith, are immune from liability for acts or omissions related to the provision of a notice that a rental unit is a public nuisance.

Senate Bill 43 would make a slight change to the current Under current law, only a city, town or village law law. enforcement agency may give notice to a property owner to inform them that their property is being used for drug or gang related activity. The language of the current law has created problems for law enforcement officials, like Sheriffs, who are the only police authority for a particular area. In situations like this, where an area is not protected by a city, town, or village law enforcement agency, a property owner is unable to have a tenant evicted for drug or gang activity due to the wording of the existing statute. Under current law, a county Sheriff is unable to initiate the process of evicting individuals engaged in drug and gang activity due to the limiting language of the current statute, even though the Sheriff has jurisdiction over the property.

Senate Bill 43 would close the loophole in the current law that renders Sheriffs and state drug enforcement agents unable to enforce current drug abatement statutes. Correcting this loophole will make it easier for law enforcement officers to handle drug and gang related problems statewide. All state law enforcement agencies should have the authority to enforce the current statute to combat the influence of drugs and gangs in our neighborhoods.

Thank you, Chairperson George and Members of the committee, for this opportunity to discuss the merits of Senate Bill 43.